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McNary recognized senior stat girls, front, from left, Malina Martin, Emily Phelps, Kaili Townsend and Mellisa Jimenez and wrastlers, back, from left, Killian Dato, Carlos Vincent, Wyatt Kesler, Sean Burrows, Carlos Flores and Isaiah Rhodes before the Celtics dual with Sprague on Thursday, Feb. 9.



McNary junior Brayden Ebbs won his final dual of the regular season before he attempts to win back-to-back district titles.

Celtics prep for districts

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

McNary went 2-6 in the Greater Valley Conference this season but head coach Jason Ebbs expects a stronger finish at the district meet on Feb. 17-18 at West Salem.

The biggest reason is the Celtics are finally getting healthy.

"We're trying to slowly but surely put the puzzle pieces back together," Ebbs said. "I've never had a season like this season. We haven't put our best guns out on a mat one time."

Led by Brayden Ebbs, who was the GVC champion at 138 pounds last season as a sophomore, McNary expects to fill 24 of 28 spots at the district tournament, only missing 195 and 220 pounds.

Winning a second GVC title won't be easy for Brayden, who has jumped to 145 this season, where he's lost two matches, once to Ian Carlos

of North Salem and then to Michael Abeysa of McMinnville.

"Both guys were good tough matches," Brayden said. "I can compete with both of them. I feel pretty strongly going into districts. I always compete well there. I just want to wrestle my best. 145 is probably the toughest bracket in the state of Oregon right now and I'm glad to be a part of it and making it one of the toughest brackets in the state."

Senior Wyatt Kesler (152) and junior Isaiah Putnam (170) are both looking to return to the state tournament as well after both placed third in the GVC last season.

Kesler missed the final two weeks of the season after injuring his knee in practice.

"Every season there's all these things you can't predict and plan for and we're taking our turn," coach Ebbs said.

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Senior wrestlers honored

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

Jason Ebbs wasn't just McNary seniors Wyatt Kessler, Sean Burrows and Carlos Vincent's coach for four years. He also knew them as young children on the Celtic Mat Club and as friends to his son, Brayden and daughter, Taylor.

"That's just a different deal right there," Ebbs said.

"That's the product of being a coach in the community for 14 years. I'm no longer (just) a coach. There's some friendships there. There's some relationships there and just trying to help kids make the next step into the world and be great. They're good people. I'm happy to be by their side, for sure."

Kessler, Burrows, Vincent were recognized on Thursday, Feb. 9 before a duel with Sprague, along with first-year senior wrestlers Carlos Flores and Isaiah Rhodes,

who Ebbs has enjoyed getting to know.

"I love the first-year seniors that come out," he said. "We usually end up with one or two of those. That's awesome and it's nice to have that opportunity to build a relationship with them."

At 132 pounds, Burrows used a take down in the first round and a reversal in the second to win his final home match at McNary 4-2 over Jordan Short in a battle of two district placers last season.

"I've been wrestling here for 10 years. I had to come out here and leave everything," Burrows said. "I wrestled really hard and I feel like he broke first and I was able to keep pressuring him."

The win wasn't enough for the Celtics to knock off one of the best teams in the state as Sprague came away with a 56-12 victory.

"We knew that Sprague was a tough team and winning this dual was a pretty

daunting task but I was extremely proud of every kid going out, standing tall and fighting until the end," Ebbs said.

"They usually bring a little bit of the best out of us and a good competitive spirit. Our kids seem to step up and work hard to perform, win or lose, and they do the same to us. One thing I can always count on Sprague for is a good old-fashioned rivalry and we love it. It helps keep our sport alive. Kids are excited. Moms and dads are excited and you can't lose when that's happening."

McNary's other points came from Enrique Vincent, who at 120 pounds, returned from injury after missing much of the season with an injury to edge Luke Merzenich 10-7, and Brayden Ebbs, who at 145 pounds pinned Dalton Lethco-Willis in the second period.

Sprague won four matches by pin fall and two via forfeit.

Farr signs with Linfield

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

McNary senior Sam Farr only had to look 28 miles northwest to McMinnville to fulfill his goal of playing college football.

The offensive lineman signed with Linfield College on Wednesday, Feb. 1 in the McNary library.

"It was definitely a goal of mine and has been ever since I started playing football," Farr said. "It felt like all the hard work that I'd put in ever since I started playing football started to pay off. It's really humbling and I'm so excited as well. It's a huge opportunity and a huge compliment to me."

Farr first heard from Linfield the spring after his junior football season when the Wildcats Offensive Line and Associate Head Coach Doug Hire visited McNary. The

two met in the library.

"We ended up talking about everything, what my senior year was going to look like, how the recruiting process was going to go and he just kind of introduced me to the entire football program as well as the school," said Farr, who then went to a skills clinic at Linfield over the summer, followed by the Wildcats first home game of the season, a 27-10 win over Pacific Lutheran on Nov. 12.

Farr also spent his summer going to clinics at Willamette University and George Fox, Division-III programs that also play in the Northwest Conference and suffered crushing losses to Linfield as the Wildcats went 9-2 in their 61st consecutive winning season and eighth straight conference title.

While Farr is looking forward to joining a successful

football program, he also felt comfortable on campus.

"On all my visits there I just felt at home," Farr said. "It felt like a place that I could really fit into. I love the coaching staff. I met a couple of the teachers there and they seemed pretty cool. My uncle went there and he had nothing but good things to say."

Farr, who started at guard his junior season at McNary and then split time between center and guard as a senior, said he should also have a shot at early playing time as the Wildcats graduated 22 seniors.

"They have more of a need," Farr said. "They haven't had a lot of depth on the offensive line."

Farr also believes Linfield will help him continue to build character and make himself a better person.

"The whole program is



Submitted
McNary senior Sam Farr, accompanied by Celtics head coach Jeff Auvinen, signed with Linfield College on Wednesday, Feb. 1.

about developing young men into successful people and that's why their program is so good," he said.

With the motto, "The Power of a Small College," Linfield's main campus has just 1,700 students and an 11

to 1 student to faculty ratio, which also interested Farr, who plans to major in forensic psychology.



McNary junior Sarah Eckert placed fifth in the 500-yard free style and eighth in the 100 butterfly at the district meet.

Eckert paces Celtics at GVC meet

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

McNary junior Sarah Eckert led the Celtics at the Greater Valley Conference Championships, finishing fifth in the 500-yard free in 5:42.21 and eighth in the 100 butterfly in 1:06.70.

Swimming on Feb. 10-11 at the McMinnville Aquatic Center, Eckert also helped the McNary girls 200 free relay with Emily Alger, Alyssa Garvey and Haley Debban place

fourth in 1:48.39.

Debban advanced to A Finals in the 100 breaststroke as well, where she took eighth in 1:19.32.

Lizzie Bryant tied for seventh in the 100 backstroke, finishing in 1:09.07. Bryant, Alger, Emma Garland and Kyle McCarty also placed sixth in the 400 free relay in 4:12.85.

The Lady Celts, who finished seventh in the GVC with 143.5 points, were with-

out reigning district champion and Female Swimmer of the Year Marissa Kuch, who missed the meet with an injury.

The McNary boys also placed seventh in the district with 150 points.

Individually, freshman Kyle Hooper took sixth in the 500 free in 5:15.52.

The Celtics also had three relays finish in the top eight in the district.

Brock Weyer, Harrison

Vaughn, Jake Weyer and Grant Biondi placed fifth in the 200 medley relay in 1:53.41. Biondi, Wyatt Sherwood, Jabez Rhoades and Jake Weyer took sixth in the 200 free relay in 1:37.37.

In the final event of the meet, Sherwood, Vaughn, Hooper and Parker Dean then finished seventh in the 400 free relay in 3:44.21.

West Salem was the girls GVC champion. McMinnville won the boys.